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July 17, 2013

The Honorable George Miller  
Senior Democrat  
U.S. House Committee on Education & the Workforce  
2101 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Miller:

On behalf of the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, thank you for your leadership in promoting growth, accountability and equity for all students, including students in public charter schools, in your amendment to the Student Success Act (H.R. 5).

As you know, public charter schools are affected by all of the ESEA and its accompanying requirements. The National Alliance believes that in order for the public charter school sector to grow and continue to produce results through innovation, the reauthorization of ESEA should significantly expand support for both the creation of new charter schools and the replication and expansion of public charter schools with a demonstrated track record of success in improving student achievement. At the same time, ESEA reauthorization presents an opportunity to encourage innovation and quality growth on a national scale and to roll back the encroachment of charter school freedoms that threaten to stifle student outcomes.

With the changes your amendment makes to the requirements for highly qualified teachers in current law, you help reduce a burden on public charter schools that does little to improve student outcomes. While your amendment does not eliminate the definition of a highly qualified teacher, it does modify and make improvements that are a step in the right direction.

We also appreciate that your bill includes the bipartisan Charter Schools Program (CSP) language from H.R. 2218 that was passed in 2011, and the improvement you made to the program evaluation requirements.

We look forward to working with you to clarify Title I so that it strengthens charter school accountability by ensuring that charter schools do not have to undergo school improvement interventions in order to meet federal law. Rather, we believe that low-performing charter schools should be closed in accordance with the terms of their chartering agreement.

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In addition, we remain concerned that your amendment does not authorize a competitive grant program that allows high-performing charter management organizations (CMOs) to apply directly to the Secretary for the replication and expansion of successful schools. Since FY2010, CSP Grants for the Replication and Expansion of High-Quality Schools have allowed some of the most promising of charter models that have a proven track record of increasing academic achievement and attainment for all students to scale.

Finally, the demand for charter schools far exceeds the supply. The National Alliance estimates that the current demand for available charter school seats exceeded supply by more than 900,000 applications in the 2012-13 school year. We very much appreciate and support the increased authorization for the CSP in the Miller amendment. However, we are concerned that the increase will not correspond with the growth of the movement, and thus restrict the sector's ability to meet parental demand. Thus, we strongly encourage you to increase the authorization level of the program.

Thank you again for your leadership to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, your efforts on behalf of charter schools and your tireless service to improve education for all students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nina Rees", is written over a light blue circular stamp.

Nina Rees  
President and CEO